

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wake Island

and or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town

vicinity of

state

Pacific Ocean

code

county

code

3. Classification

Category

☐ district
☐ building(s)
☐ structure
☒ site
☐ object

Ownership

☒ public
☐ private
☐ both

Public Acquisition

☐ in process
☐ being considered

Status

☐ occupied
☐ unoccupied
☐ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted
☐ yes: unrestricted
☐ no

Present Use

☐ agriculture
☐ commercial
☐ educational
☐ entertainment
☐ government
☐ industrial
☒ military

☐ museum
☐ park
☐ private residence
☐ religious
☐ scientific
☐ transportation
☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name United States Air Force

street & number

city, town Hickam Air Force Base

☒ vicinity of

Honolulu

state Hawaii 96853

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. 15th Air Base Wing

street & number Pacific Air Force

city, town Hickam Air Force Base

state Hawaii 96853

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated
☒ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Wake¹ Island is a coral atoll comprised of three islands closely surrounded by a reef. The islands form a V; Wake, the largest island, forms the apex of the V, while Peale and Wilkes islands are the tips. The sides of the V are about five miles in length; the circumference is twelve miles; and total land area amounts to 2,600 acres. The islands are relatively flat, the highest elevation above sea level is 21 feet. Coconut palms are not native to Wake; the land, where it has not been cleared, is covered with thick, scrubby vegetation. No sources of fresh water exist except rainwater. Wake is subject to fierce typhoons, and permanent structures are designed to withstand such storms. Good roads connect the three islands, a causeway, built by Seabees in 1946, leading from Wake to Wilkes (in 1941, naval boats ferried between the two), and a steel and plank bridge joining Wake and Peale. Paralleling this bridge are the ruins of a Japanese-built causeway.

Wake Island

Wake Island proper is the center of operations today. Detachment 4, Fifteenth Air Base Wing operates the airfield and its commanding officer is the island commander. A contractor employs about 400 civilians, mostly Filipinos, to provide support activities. The 10,000-foot runway lies east and west along the southern flank of the island, on the same alignment as the shorter 1941 runway. Administrative offices are in a large, modern terminal building. Service and maintenance shops extend north from the east end of the runway. Beyond these is a huge water catchment that collects rainwater. Paralleling the eastern shore is a large housing complex, now mostly abandoned. Another housing area, for civilians and visitors and complete with mess and recreation facilities, is at the northwest end of Wake, on the site of the pre-war contractor's camp, Camp Two. Petroleum storage facilities stand at the southwest end of the island, where an entrance channel and small boat harbor have been dredged between it and Wilkes. The entrance channel originally led into the lagoon but is now closed off by the causeway joining Wake and Wilkes.

Post-war developments, such as the runway and housing developments, have eliminated evidence of the Japanese occupation, 1941-1945, from parts of the island. Yet, much remains: the admiralty command post near the bridge to Peale, more than twenty concrete pillboxes on the ocean beaches, four semicircular bombproof blockhouses, an unusual rock-walled aircraft revetment, an antiaircraft gun battery (no weapons), ammunition magazines, several bombproof storage buildings, and the ruins of the Japanese power plant. Along the beach on either side of the east end of the runway are large complexes of collapsed wood and earth bunkers. In this rubble are an 8-inch gun emplacement and parts of a coastal searchlight.

1. Although an atoll, Wake is officially called an island, in the singular form. The origins of this usage seem to be the pre-war U.S. Navy's desire to distinguish Wake from other atolls, most of which were Japanese territory.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1941-1945 Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The success of the U.S. Marines in driving off the first Japanese invasion attempt at Wake, just three days after the Japanese destroyed most of the battleships of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, was of the utmost importance to the morale of the American people. The apocryphal message from the Marine commander, "Send us more Japs," became the rallying cry of the nation at a time of dark despair. When Wake fell to the Japanese just before Christmas Eve, 1941, national sentiment to get on with the war rose to a new pitch. "Remember Wake" became almost as popular a patriotic slogan as "Remember Pearl Harbor." Also significant is the fact that the Marines' success against the first Japanese attack was the only time in the Pacific War that coastal guns drove off an amphibious landing.

The capture of Wake was important to Japan for this removed a threat to its line of defense from Tokyo to the Marshall Islands and it was a step closer to a future target, Midway.

Fortifying Wake

Named for a British sea captain, William Wake, who passed by in 1796, Wake Island remained unclaimed for another century. The isolated, waterless atoll drew little interest in itself. Distances alone helped to explain its neglect: 2,300 miles from Honolulu, 1,985 miles from Tokyo, and 1,510 miles from Guam. Commo. Charles Wilkes, U.S. Navy, visited Wake in 1840 on his famous voyage of exploration, but the United States took little other interest in the speck of land until it went to war with Spain in 1898. With the acquisition of Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines, the United States saw the importance Wake could have in trans-Pacific communications.

On July 4, 1898, U.S. Army Transport Thomas dropped anchor off the island. Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt went ashore, claimed the island for the United States, and raised the Stars and Stripes.²

1. The Japanese attacked Wake on December 10, Hawaiian time, or December 11, Wake time. Also, Wake is 2½ hours behind Hawaii.

2. In 1922, Edwin H. Bryan, Honolulu, discovered a section of a flagstaff on Wilkes Island that had "USAT THOMAS" burned on it. In 1899, the Navy landed on Wake and again took formal possession. Edwin H. Bryan, Jr., American Polynesia and the Hawaiian Chain (Honolulu, 1942), p. 211; Capt. E.A. Junghans, USN, "Wake, 1568-1946," U.S. Marine Corps Records, World War II, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD, hereinafter cited as WNRC.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2,600 acres

Quadrangle name None

Quadrangle scale _____ None _____

UTM References	Not available
----------------	---------------

A

Zone Easting Northing

The figure shows three separate coordinate axes. The first axis is labeled 'Zone' and has two tick marks. The second axis is labeled 'Easting' and has four tick marks. The third axis is labeled 'Northing' and has four tick marks. Each axis is represented by a horizontal line with vertical tick marks extending upwards.

B

Zone Easting Northing

D

E

F

G 

[illegible]

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Erwin N. Thompson, Historian
-------------------	------------------------------

organization Denver Service Center, National Park Service **date** May 13, 1984

street & number 755 Parfet Street **telephone** (303) 234-4509

city or town Denver **state** Colorado 80225

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title	date
-------	------

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description Page 2

Less remains from the 1941 American build-up. The most impressive features are three large reinforced-concrete, igloo-type magazines which played important roles during the fighting. A 3-inch, U.S. anti-aircraft gun, M3, 1941, is mounted as a memorial in the civilian residential area. This weapon is believed to be a veteran of the battle for Wake. Post-war memorials include a monument dedicated to U.S. Marines, a monument for the Japanese garrison which was erected by Japan Air Lines, and a chapel. All three are across the road from the air terminal-Air Force headquarters building.

Wilkes Island

Wilkes is unoccupied today. Petroleum storage tanks stand near its east end and a navigation beacon stands in the center of a large cleared area at its west end. An incomplete entrance channel, which was being dredged at the time of the Japanese attack, almost bisects the island. This channel was being constructed for a proposed submarine base. West of the channel, a maze of Japanese rock-walled trenches and rifle-pits ("spider holes") remains near a lone American anti-aircraft gun emplacement. A similar complex is found east of the channel. One or two anti-tank ditches protect the shores. The most poignant reminder of the war is a large coral boulder lying on the lagoon beach. Carved on this Prisoner of War Rock is "PW,5-10-43." The unknown carver had to have been one of 98 American civilians on Wake whom the Japanese killed later in 1943.

Peale Island

Peale Island is also unoccupied except for two or three people living near the bridge. Elsewhere on the island are two or three beach houses, an airmen's open-sided beach club, an open-sided theater, and other modest recreational facilities. Toward the west end is an abandoned U.S. Coast Guard loran station. The west end itself has been set aside as a bird sanctuary and is off-limits. (At sunset, the air is black with birds coming back to land.)

Peale is covered with the wreckage of war. Ruins of the Pan American hotel, outbuildings, and clipper pier; the Navy's seaplane ramp and concrete aircraft parking area; and the concrete floors and lower walls of several naval air station structures survive. Japanese ruins on Peale are extensive. At least

2. There is some confusion in official records whether the Navy or Pan American constructed the seaplane ramp. The writer believes the Navy did the work as part of its naval air station and that Pan American used the facility when it resumed operations in the Pacific after the war.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormFor NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description Page 3

six large anti-tank ditches are extant. Many infantry rifle-pits remain along the seaward shore. A few underground structures exist in the interior of the island, as do earthen revetments that once contained buildings. One existing frame building, sunk into the earth, is possibly Japanese. If so, it is a rare survivor inasmuch as few frame buildings of Japanese construction remain in the Central Pacific. The portion of the ocean shore in front of the naval air station ruins on Peale is protected by a concrete seawall. Whether it was constructed by Americans or Japanese cannot be determined. In the middle of the wall a pillbox has been incorporated that is definitely of Japanese design. On the northwest coast of the island stands a huge 8-inch Japanese gun of British manufacture. While the gun tube is sound, the steel shielding around the weapon has greatly rusted away, a testimony to the excessive humidity of tropical islands. Nearby, a large earth-covered, concrete ammunition magazine may be entered. Other earthen mounds in this vicinity may contain structures but any entrances have been buried. Not far from the gun, toward the west, is a semicircular concrete blockhouse. Inscribed on its roof, while the concrete was still wet, is "10-4-42," probably the work of another doomed American civilian.

Regrettably, no physical evidence remains of three 5-inch naval gun batteries that were on Wake in 1941, one on each island. With these guns, U.S. Marines drove off the enemy's first invasion force.

Post-war construction has been largely restricted to Wake Island proper. The U.S. Navy occupied the island from 1945 to 1947, using it as a refueling stop for trans-Pacific naval and army transport flights and a weather station. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) oversaw commercial and military Pacific flights from 1947 to 1972. During this period many of the modern structures now found on the island were built. With the introduction of long-range jet aircraft, Wake was no longer required as a refueling stop and the FAA relinquished its facilities to the U.S. Air Force in 1972.

Areas Recommended for Nomination

The areas recommended for nomination as a National Historic Landmark are:

Peale Island. All of Peale Island so as to include all Japanese structures, earthworks, weapons, and fortifications; the ruins of the Pan American Airways

3. It is likely that additional underground structures exist that are not now discernible on the surface. The Japanese enlisted garrison of nearly 4,000 was housed on Peale.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7. Description Page 4

establishment; and the ruins of the U.S. Naval Air Station. Features on Peale not included are the abandoned U.S. Coast Guard Station, present-day recreation facilities, and employee residences.

Wilkes Island. All of Wilkes Island so as to include all Japanese structures, earthworks, and fortifications; the U.S. antiaircraft gun emplacement; and the Prisoner of War Rock. Features on Wilkes not included are the navigation beacon and petroleum storage tanks.

Wake Island. All areas that have Japanese structures and fortifications, including command posts, blockhouses, pillboxes, power plant, storehouses, magazines, aircraft revetments, gun emplacements, rifle-pits, and earthworks; the two memorials to the U.S. Marines and Japanese forces; and the American ammunition magazines. Features on Wake Island not included are all post-war construction, such as the runway, taxiways, aircraft and other maintenance areas and buildings, air terminal-headquarters, water catchments, residential areas, and petroleum storage areas.

Also recommended for nomination are the bridge and causeway between Wake and Peale islands, the entrance channel between Wake and Wilkes islands, and the unfinished channel on Wilkes. Not included are the small boat harbor and the causeway between Wake and Wilkes.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance Page 2

In 1923, a joint scientific expedition sponsored by Yale University and Bishop Museum, Honolulu, explored and charted Wake, naming the three islands for Captain Wake, Commodore Wilkes, and Titian Peale, who was Wilkes' naturalist. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an Executive Order in 1934 giving the Navy Department jurisdiction over the island.

Pan American Airways applied in 1935 for permission to establish a seaplane base at Wake for its "Clipper" flying boats, the pioneer trans-Pacific air route: San Francisco, Hawaii, Midway, Wake, Guam, Manila, and later, Hong Kong. Permission granted, a supply ship reached Wake in May 1935. Peale Island was selected as the base site; a one-story hotel was constructed (the flight across the Pacific then took six days), hydroponic vegetable gardens were established, and the essential rainwater catchments were built. The first Clipper swooped into the lagoon within two months, beginning once-a-week trans-Pacific service.

Not until 1938 did the Navy take a hard look at Wake, when a board of officers recommended its development as an outlying base. Congress appropriated the funds, and the contractor, Morrison-Knudsen Company of Boise, Idaho, arrived on the island in January 1941.³ By December, the contractor had a force of 1,146 civilians on the island and the work of building a naval air station was 65 percent completed. The necessary equipment and materials were on hand to complete construction by the summer of 1942.

The 1st Defense Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps, under Maj. James P.S. Devereaux, began arriving on Wake in August 1941 and established a tent camp at the southwest end of Wake Island (Camp One). By October, 15 officers and 373 Marines were on the island. Their days were filled with work: constructing their own quarters, emplacing coastal and antiaircraft guns, refueling by hand B-17 bombers en route to the Philippines, and acting as stevedores when supply ships arrived. Their strength was augmented on December 4 with the arrival of Maj. Paul A. Putnam's Marine Fighter Squadron 211 with twelve F4F3 Grumman Wildcats flying in from carrier USS Enterprise. Major Devereaux was superseded as island commander on November 28 with the arrival of Comdr. Winfield Scott Cunningham, U.S. Navy, who established his headquarters at Camp Two. Comdr. Campbell Keene, U.S. Navy, commanded the naval air station itself. By December 7, 1941, Wake's population amounted to over 1,700 men:

3. Morrison-Knudsen was a part of a larger conglomeration, Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases, which undertook construction at several Pacific islands and in Alaska at this time.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8. Significance

Page

3

Navy	72
Army Signal detachment	6
1st Marine Defense Battalion	379
Marine Fighter Squadron 211	59
Pan American (mostly from Guam)	70
Contractors, Pacific Naval Air Bases	1,146

The island's principal defenses consisted of three batteries of 5-inch guns removed from old battleships. These two-gun batteries were set up at Peacock Point on the south tip of Wake, Kuku Point at the west end of Wilkes, and Toki Point at the west end of Peale. Each island had a battery of four 3-inch antiaircraft guns, but there were not sufficient crews to man all these weapons. Twenty-four .50 caliber machine guns supplemented the antiaircraft defense, and a number of .30 caliber machine guns covered the beaches. No radar had been installed. The men on Wake were aware of the tense situation in the Pacific as 1941 drew to a close. At one point, diplomatic protocol caused Major Devereaux to entertain the Japanese diplomat, Saburo Kurusu, en route to Washington for his infamous negotiations with the United States government. The first Japanese bomb fell on Pearl Harbor at 7:55 a.m., December 7. Word of the attack reached Wake within an hour and a half. Immediately, battle stations were manned. Four Wildcats were already on patrol. The China Clipper had just left for Guam, but returned to Wake to volunteer a search patrol. While the Clipper was still on the water, at 11:58 a.m. (2:28 p.m. Hawaiian time), eighteen Japanese bombers flew low and fast over Wake bombing and strafing the airfield. In a few seconds, 23 officers and men of the fighter squadron were dead, and another 11 wounded. Seven of the eight planes on the ground were destroyed, and the eighth was damaged. The Japanese made a second run over Peale Island hitting the naval air station and Pan American installations, killing ten civilians. As quickly as they had arrived, the enemy planes disappeared, returning to Roi airfield at Kwajalein Atoll, 720 miles away.

On each of the next two days, 27 bombers returned to the attack. The new naval-civilian hospital at Camp Two was destroyed and 21 men killed. Two of the 5-inch guns were damaged. A large store of dynamite at the new channel on Wilkes was detonated. The attacks were not one-sided though; Marine pilots shot down three of the bombers. New hospitals were established in two of the four igloo magazines on the east side of Wake.

Just after midnight on the morning of December 11 (December 10 in Hawaii), island defenders sighted flashing lights off-shore, indicating that a Japanese task force had arrived. At daybreak, the warships closed Peacock Point and, apparently believing that Wake had been seriously weakened by bombing, turned to the northwest, parallel to the south shore, firing and closing as they proceeded. The Marines held their fire until the vessels were within ranges of from 4,500 to 6,000 yards. Within minutes, a Japanese destroyer was sunk and two cruisers, two destroyers, and a transport were damaged. The Japanese force withdrew from the action with all possible speed.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance Page 4

The four surviving Wildcats took to the air armed with two 100-pound bombs and .50 caliber machine guns each. Expending their ammunition with speed, they returned to the field for more (two planes each managed to make four sorties before distances became too great). Capt. Henry T. Elrod, USMC, who already had two bombers to his credit, by some lucky chance got one of his small bombs below the decks of a destroyer. ⁴ A fire started and within thirty miles of Wake, the destroyer blew up and sank.

Considerably wiser and poorer, the Japanese returned to their naval base at Kwajalein. The Marines and civilians who had volunteered to help were jubilant. The only serious damage that occurred was to Elrod's plane that had been hit by Japanese fire and crashed on landing. Wake's air power was down to three planes and one of them needed its engine replaced. The two operable planes soon had to take off again when 18 Japanese planes bombed Peacock Point at 9:45 a.m. This raid was as fruitless as the task force's, and the Marines claimed three down and a "probable." That evening, Commander Cunningham ordered a common grave prepared for Wake's dead, military and civilian. On this same day, Guam fell to the Japanese.

During the next eleven days, the Japanese bombed Wake eight times. Devereaux's earth and log command post was blown up and he set up a new headquarters in one of the igloo magazines where Wake's sole remaining radio reported the island's fate to the outside world. Enemy planes systematically demolished everything above ground and the survivors quickly learned to live underground. On December 20, a navy patrol bomber arrived from Pearl Harbor bearing mail and news. For a brief time, ⁵ rumors spread that a task force from Pearl was coming for the relief of Wake.

On December 21 and 22, Japanese carrier planes from Soryu and Hiryu roared over the island. ⁶ Wake's defenders realized this signaled the approach of

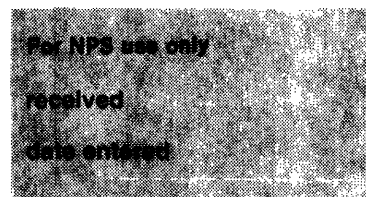
4. At the time, Marines thought the ship was a cruiser.

5. It was more than a rumor. A task force centered around carrier USS Saratoga departed Pearl Harbor December 15. When the Japanese landed on Wake in their second assault, the task force was 425 miles from the island. Even before news of Wake's surrender was received, Pearl Harbor recalled the ships. Samuel Eliot Morison, The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942 (Boston, 1948, reprint 1982), pp. 235-252.

6. Both carriers had participated in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance Page 5

another Japanese invasion force. In the second carrier strike, Wake's two surviving aircraft took to the air. One pilot was wounded but managed to bring his damaged plane down, but it would never fly again. The other Marine pilot did not return. Major Putnam gathered the remnants of his air force and reported to Major Devereaux for duty as ground troops. As darkness fell on Wake, the defenders observed flashes of light at sea.

After the repulse at Wake, Rear Admiral Sadamichi Kajioka had reorganized his task force at Kwajalein Atoll. For a week the enlarged force trained in landing exercises. It sortied on December 20 and proceeded to Wake. The two carriers were already in the area. A support group of six cruisers took station east of Wake in the event American forces advanced from Pearl Harbor. The enemy plan, which was realized, was to have landing craft place troops at Peacock Point on Wake Island and on the south shore of Wilkes with the mission of silencing the 5-inch gun batteries. Meanwhile, two destroyer transports would head straight for the reef on the south side of Wake at 12 knots and deliberately beach themselves to ensure that the troops reached the shore.

At 2:45 a.m., December 23, the two transports rammed the reef and began disgorging from 500 to 800 Special Naval Landing Force troops. Facing them were 85 Marines, including a handful of Marine airmen under Captain Elrod. The Marines had emplaced a 3-inch gun near the runway and opened fire on the transports, setting them on fire. Machine guns along the beach added their support, and the 5-inch guns on Peale Island fired across the lagoon at the vessels. Elrod's men were forced back to the gun position where they held out for six hours while surrounded by some 200 enemy. In the end, Elrod was shot and killed. A navy captain wrote of the gallant Marine, "No one present contributed more to the defense of the island than he; probably no one contributed as much." At 5:30 a.m., Commander Cunningham radioed his famed report to Pearl Harbor, "Enemy has landed. Issue in doubt."

The Japanese advanced across the runway, slowed temporarily by machine gun fire but fanning out to the west and east. Small pockets of Marines in their rear continued to resist. About 6:00 a.m., a group of 40 Marines established a last-ditch line across the island in the vicinity of Devereaux's command post.

Meanwhile on Wilkes Island, Marine artillerymen took on the 100-man Japanese force landing there. Although the enemy quickly overran the 3-inch antiaircraft battery, the Marines prevented the Japanese from expanding their beachhead. At dawn, counterattacking from east and west, the Marines overran

7. Junghams, "Wake," p. 12.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

Date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance Page 6

the Japanese position, practically annihilating the enemy. Unfortunately, Capt. W. McC. Platt was unable to contact Devereaux by radio to inform him of the Wilkes success. Back on Wake, Devereaux could see Japanese flags flying on Wilkes and assumed that the island had been lost. Platt gathered his men and two prisoners and started for Wake.

In his command post, Devereaux had lost contact not only with Wilkes Island but with his Marines at Peacock Point (which apparently had been overrun) and Camp One. He was able to reach Cunningham at Camp Two and called him to discuss the situation. Cunningham informed him that he had learned there would be no relief from Pearl Harbor. At 9:00 a.m., Cunningham decided to surrender and so informed the Marines. Devereaux, armed with a white flag, advanced south along the road until he met a Japanese officer. For the next six hours, escorted by a Japanese guard, he trudged over Wake ordering his disbelieving men to surrender. When he reached Wilkes Island, he learned of the Marines' successful defense.

American casualties from December 8 to 23 were estimated at 109 killed: 49 Marines (including 33 from Squadron 211), 37 contractor civilians, 13 naval personnel, and 10 Pan American employees. The Japanese took about 1,600 prisoners, of whom 450 were military personnel. Japanese losses for the period were estimated at 700 killed on land, at sea, and in the air.

Wake Under the Rising Sun

Americans on Wake spent a rainy Christmas Day, 1941, camped in the open air. That evening they moved into the battered barracks at Camp Two. The Japanese immediately put able-bodied prisoners to work constructing fortifications and improving the airfield, using American heavy equipment and materials. Military and the important civilian prisoners were evacuated to China on January 12, 1942. A small group of wounded personnel was shipped separately to Japan. On September 30, 1942, all remaining prisoners except 98 civilians, were transported to prison camps in China. The 98 men retained on Wake were heavy equipment operators whose skills the Japanese required in building the advanced base. No word was heard of these men until after the war, when it was learned that in October 1943, following an American carrier

8. It is apparent that little rapport existed between the two officers. After the war, both wrote books defending their individual views concerning events on Wake. Cunningham was bitter when he learned that Devereaux and the Marines were regarded as heroes, while he, the island commander, was virtually ignored.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8. Significance

Page 7

strike, the Japanese commander, Rear Adm. Shigumatsu Sakaibara, ordered them shot. The killing took place on the north shore of Wake Island, possibly on or near the site of a grove of ironwood trees today.

Japan's defenses on Wake were substantial. Approximately 65 pieces of artillery ranging from captured American 3-inch antiaircraft guns to 8-inch coastal guns, were revetted with coral. Twenty-four light tanks were brought to the island. Aircraft strength peaked at 55 bombers and fighters in April 1943. The combined army and navy garrison on Wake reached a total of more than 4,400, the last significant reinforcement arriving in January 1944 just prior to the American invasion of the Marshalls.

During 1942, the United States paid relatively little attention to the Japanese build-up on Wake. In February 1943, Vice Adm. William F. Halsey, Jr., led an aerial and naval bombardment on Japanese positions. Army bombers, staging through Midway, raided the island in June.¹⁰ As 1943 progressed and the United States prepared for its drive through the Central Pacific, the number and intensity of attacks increased. In October, a six-carrier task force carried out a two-day operation against Wake with both carrier and land planes participating. This attack succeeded in eliminating Japanese air strength on the island and destroyed ninety percent of the buildings. The capture of Kwajalein and Enewetok atolls in the Marshalls in February 1944 gave the Americans additional bases for launching land planes against the island. By early 1944, an air and naval blockade of Wake was complete. The last Japanese supply ship reached the island in December 1943. Only an occasional submarine arrived at Wake during the rest of the war. Food supplies became desperately short. It was estimated that 1,500 men died as a result of malnutrition by August 1945. In addition, the United States allowed a Japanese hospital ship to remove nearly 1,000 malnutrition cases in July 1945.

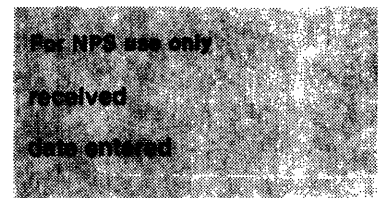
Admiral Sakaibara surrendered Wake on September 4, 1945, only 1,240 men remaining in his command. The American decision to bypass the island and to neutralize it had proven wise. Wake Island prepared to resume its role in trans-Pacific transportation and communications.

9. Admiral Sakaibara was executed on Guam in June 1947.

10. Army bombers had attempted earlier that month to bomb Wake, but were unable to find it. Maj. Gen. Clarence L. Tinker, commanding general, Seventh Air Force, and his plane disappeared in the Pacific on this flight.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 9. Bibliography Page 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bryan, Edwin H., Jr. American Polynesia and the Hawaiian Chain. Tongg Publishing Company, 1942.

Carter, Kit C. and Mueller, Robert. Combat Chronology, 1941-1945. The Army Air Forces In World War II. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.

Cohen, Stan. Enemy on Island. Issue in Doubt, The Capture of Wake Island, December 1941. Missoula: Pictorial Histories, 1983.

Cunningham, W. Scott. Wake Island Command. Boston: Little, Brown, 1961.

Devereaux, James P.S. The Story of Wake Island. New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1947.

Hough, Frank O. The Island War, The United States Marine Corps in the Pacific. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1947.

_____; Ludwig, Verle E.; and Shaw, Henry I. Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal. History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, vol. 1. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958.

Howard, Clive and Whitley, Joe. One Damned Island After Another, The Saga of the Seventh Air Force in World War II. Washington: Zenger, 1979.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls, June 1942-April 1944. History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol. 7. Boston: Little, Brown, 1951, reprint 1975.

_____. The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942. History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, vol. 3. Boston: Little, Brown, 1948, reprint 1982.

Schultz, Duane. Wake Island, The Heroic, Gallant Fight. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

U.S. Air Force. Detachment 4, 15th Air Base Wing, Wake Island. Historical File.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

9. Bibliography

Page

3

U.S. Marine Corps. Capt. Winfield S. Cunningham to Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, October 8, 1948; Col. James P.S. Devereaux, "Wake Island Report, Marine Detachment, First Defense Battalion," ca. March 1946; Commander, Marshalls-Gilberts Area to C-in-C, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas (Pearl), September 13, 1945; Capt. E.A. Junghans, USN, "Wake, 1568-1946;" Lt. John Hamas to Lt. Col. James P.S. Devereaux, "Report on What Happened and What Each Officer Did On Wake Island," October 12, 1945, all in U.S. Marine Corps World War II Records, Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific). Interrogations of Japanese Officials, vol. 72.2. Naval Analysis Division, [1946].

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10. Geographical Data Page 2

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The boundary is the outer edge of the reef that surrounds Wake Island so as to include the reef, the three islands, and the lagoon. This boundary encompasses all American and Japanese structures, earthworks, fortifications, and weapons that are found over all of the three islands from the period 1941 to 1945. It includes the reef where Japanese forces landed. It also includes the land areas on Wilkes and Wake where fighting occurred and the land area on Peale where Japanese enlisted men were garrisoned.

All post-war developments, while within this boundary, do not contribute to the significance of Wake's World War II history and are exempted.

